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PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE
FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE UNITED NATIONS
DRAFTING GROUP
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OBSERVANCE OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Possible elements for inclusion in a draft declaration

1. Characterization of the event

For the third time in the twentieth century, the peoples of the world have come to the end of a period of profound difficulty and danger.

Facing the twenty-first century, it is essential that we seize the opportunity offered by the 50 years of experience of the United Nations to ensure that our shared future work serves the human family well.

The effective design of that future work first requires an understanding of the past:

(a) The achievement of decolonization/self-determination;

(b) The establishment of a place where the voice of all nations and peoples could be heard;

(c) The provision of a civilized and constitutional forum and a facility within which and through which differences and disputes could be resolved;

(d) The provision of a legal and political framework for the control and elimination of weapons of mass destruction;

(e) The development of a structure of international cooperation - in health, food, labour, transport and communications - that has become an indispensable part of the lives of all peoples;

(f) The continuing development of international law, including in the field of human rights;

(g) Actions taken in support of the maintenance of international peace and security;

(h) The mobilization of substantial aid and assistance to developing countries.

To these achievements, which represent one of the most constructive and noble aspects of the history of the twentieth century, must be added the recognition of particular shortcomings:

(a) War, aggression and suffering have occurred too frequently;

(b) In this context, the mechanisms of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security have worked, or have been allowed to work, only unevenly;

(c) Notwithstanding efforts by the international community, the economic and social conditions of a vast number of the world's people remain miserably poor.

To this overall record must be added recognition of the unique moment at which we stand, which is characterized by:

(a) The end of the system of bipolar competition;

(b) The emergence of new States;

(c) Nationalistic/ethnic/confessional tensions;

(d) Refugees;

(e) Non-military threats to security (narcotics, AIDS);

(f) The revolution in global communications;

(g) Growth in populations;

(h) Pressures on the environment;

(i) The need to secure the rights/role of women;

(j) Global poverty;

(k) Growing unemployment.

The global system is in transition, as is the United Nations. We are determined that it will have a safe passage and arrive well prepared for the twenty-first century.

2. Reaffirmation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations

Solemn reaffirmation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations:

(a) They were valid in 1945 and remain so today;

(b) Some are even more important today, such as tolerance; harmonizing of actions; sovereign equality; peaceful settlement of disputes; and no threat of or use of force.

3. Need to implement the Charter in contemporary and anticipated circumstances

It is recognized that, in the past, problems have often had their origins in the failure to implement or adhere to the purposes and principles of the Charter, rather than in the purposes and principles themselves.

All Member States have pledged to adhere to and carry out the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

The likelihood of this occurring and its efficacy will be determined to a great extent by our willingness to address today's and tomorrow's problems.

Thus, the Charter needs to be applied to a new agenda. Such an agenda can be identified under the four main objectives the Charter lists as those which "we the peoples of the United Nations" are determined to achieve: peace, equality, justice and development.

(a) Peace

Peace and security overarch all other activities and goals, but peace is shaped by a complex of factors: economic and social deprivation; ethnic/historic/nationalist/territorial factors; social injustice; weapon balances; and involuntary movements of peoples.

Essential to effective work in the future is a highly textured definition of threats to peace and security, including non-military threats.

Preventive action/diplomacy must be given higher priority in the list of actions by the international community.

The United Nations Secretariat, itself a principal organ established under the Charter, must be significantly restructured to enable it to foster preventive diplomacy/peace-building.

Regional arrangements/actions must play a greater role in maintaining and building peace.

The relationship envisaged in the Charter between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council must be utilized.

Greater emphasis should be placed on negotiated as opposed to coercive means of settling disputes.

Humanitarian assistance must be strengthened because of its role in assisting in both attenuating the effects of conflict and in building peace.

The role of the United Nations in developing, safeguarding and monitoring treaties relating to disarmament, arms-reduction and non-proliferation of weapons must be further developed.

(b) Equality

The Charter reaffirms our faith in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.

Conventions and norms have been established by the United Nations and the international community enunciating and protecting the rights of all peoples, whether adult or children.

The future agenda should highlight the following: women; indigenous peoples; minorities (inclusive societies); equality between States; and the further implementation of relevant conventions and declarations.

(c) Justice

What is at issue in the role of law in international relations is a means of seeking to ensure that those relations are based on reason, mutual respect and known rules of conduct. These attributes will be of primary importance in the future.

The last four decades have seen extensive development of international law and this has contributed materially to the fabric of modern life and cooperation.

As new challenges arrive, for example, in the fields of information, communication, finance, trade and investment, it will be essential for this trend to continue.

The requirements of the Charter in the fields of respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law and the maintenance of international peace and security make it important that States negotiate the settlement of disputes, wherever possible, and make wider use of the international judicial system.

(d) Development

The determination stated in the Charter to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom expresses what has become, beyond doubt, the most compelling task of the Organization:

(a) This issue weighs heavily upon the majority of people;

(b) Circumstances have become, if anything, more difficult in recent years, in spite of positive political developments;

(c) Development is basic to peace, equality and justice;

(d) Development has an impact on ecological survival.

The new agenda must place at the centre of future international cooperation the determination to:

(a) Greatly reduce and eventually eliminate poverty;

(b) Ensure sustainable development;

(c) Bring about a balance in population growth;

(d) Enfranchise women in the economic sphere;

(e) Develop opportunities for productive employment.

To these ends, it will be essential to ensure the success of the new multilateral arrangements for world trade and to closely review and revise:

(a) The role of the Bretton Woods institutions;

(b) The role of the multilateral development assistance system;

(c) The role of the specialized agencies.

It will also be essential to reach a new understanding of the relationship between the United Nations and Governments, on the one hand, and the private sector, on the other, considering that the former have scarce resources but are uniquely able to provide the necessary policy and legal framework, while the latter have the bulk of the resources but cannot operate effectively in the absence of that framework.

Under Article 56 of the Charter, all Member States pledge to the economic and social goals set forth in Article 55.

The fiftieth anniversary declaration should reaffirm this pledge specifically and outline ways in which it should be implemented.

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[Note: An unprecedented effort must be instituted to communicate to the peoples of the world the nature of the United Nations - its capabilities and necessary limitations and its programmes of work - because of its relevance to the daily lives of all individuals and societies, and because of the damage that is done, including with respect to the resources base of the United Nations, by mistaken perceptions and expectations of its role.]